

The Effect of Young Civilians on Patrol (NCOP) into Community Policing: A Case of Seshego Police Station in Limpopo Province, South Africa

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Abstract: This paper pursues to investigate the effect of young civilians on patrol into community policing, a case of Seshego Police Station in Limpopo Province. Crime has taken its toll and it is being committed in different forms and shapes. It is due to the high level of crime that institutions like Police services remain vital in communities. The impact is that crime in people's lives threatens their safety and security. In most cases, the level of crime has negatively affected the countries' economy, as it raises alarm to investors. The Department of Community Safety in the Limpopo province, in response to the soaring levels of crime, came up with a crime prevention strategy that consists of seven pillars aimed at addressing the issue of crime. The invention of a youth crime prevention programme by the Department of Community Safety called Young Civilians on Patrol (YCOP). The YCOP programme was launched in 2016. Qualitative method with purposive sampling is employed in this study. The study area is Seshego, Zone 7, 9 kilometres from Polokwane. Sample size is as follows –YCOP participants were 496 throughout the province but only 8 YCOP participants who are based in the Seshego police station. One police official who is their supervisor/coordinator, 1 Station Commander (Seshego Police Station), one Senior Manager from Department of Community Safety as the custodian of the YCOP programme, 5 members of the Community Police Forum, 2 of whom from the sub forum, 2 members of the VEP, 2 members from NPO, 5 members of Business Against Crime as they all worked closely with the YCOPs in crime prevention around Seshego area. The total sample size is 25. The study recommends that DCS should involve institutions like schools, Higher education, local churches and community organisations in community policing.

Keywords: YCOP, Crime, Community safety, Community, Civilians

1. Introduction

Community policing came into realisation after the SAP Act 68 of 1995 had made provision for community police forums as a collective effort of the stakeholders in curbing crime. This model also encourages communities to take responsibility for their own safety by providing community policing. Potgieter *et al.* (2016) say that it was only after having dismantled the policing style that it was more authoritative. SAPS had to implement a new policing model that would serve the SA cultural diversity in a democratic way. It is through this community involvement that The DCOS has come up with the youth volunteer community policing programme named Young Civilians on Patrol (YCOP). The challenges of leadership within SAPS, the review of methods of data collection on the study carried out and the findings, discussed within the theoretical frameworks, enabled the interpretation of the findings. These were the strategic leadership theory, on explaining

the importance of vision casting, and the eventuality theory of organisations, which explains the importance of adapting to the external situation by leaders through developing strategies and aligning systems.

2. The SAPS as an Establishment

The structure and systems in the SAPS, in terms of section 199 and 205 of the Constitution of the RSA, is based on the three spheres of government.

The constitutional obligation of the SAPS is to contest, avert and inspect lawbreaking (The Constitution of RSA, 1996). The arrangements are Noticeable Patrolling, Detective Services and Corruption Intellect responsible on fighting delinquency by consequence detention and ease positive persuasions; as well as the lawbreaking intellect component which pleats intellect on structured corruption in precise (Freeman & McDonald, 2015). Aggravated robberies form part of organised crime too.

2.1 Conceptualising Crime

According to Tappan (2001), viewed crime is an act whereby criminal law is intentionally violated, and committed without defense from the other party and that act is penalised by the state. Different types of crimes which are punishable by the state in SA, punishable in accordance to schedule and Legislations. Criminal Procedure Act no 51 of 197 is one of them. Criminal Procedure Act is a SA legislation that governs criminal cases handled in court and regulates procedures related to criminal proceedings (Criminal Procedure Act 1997).

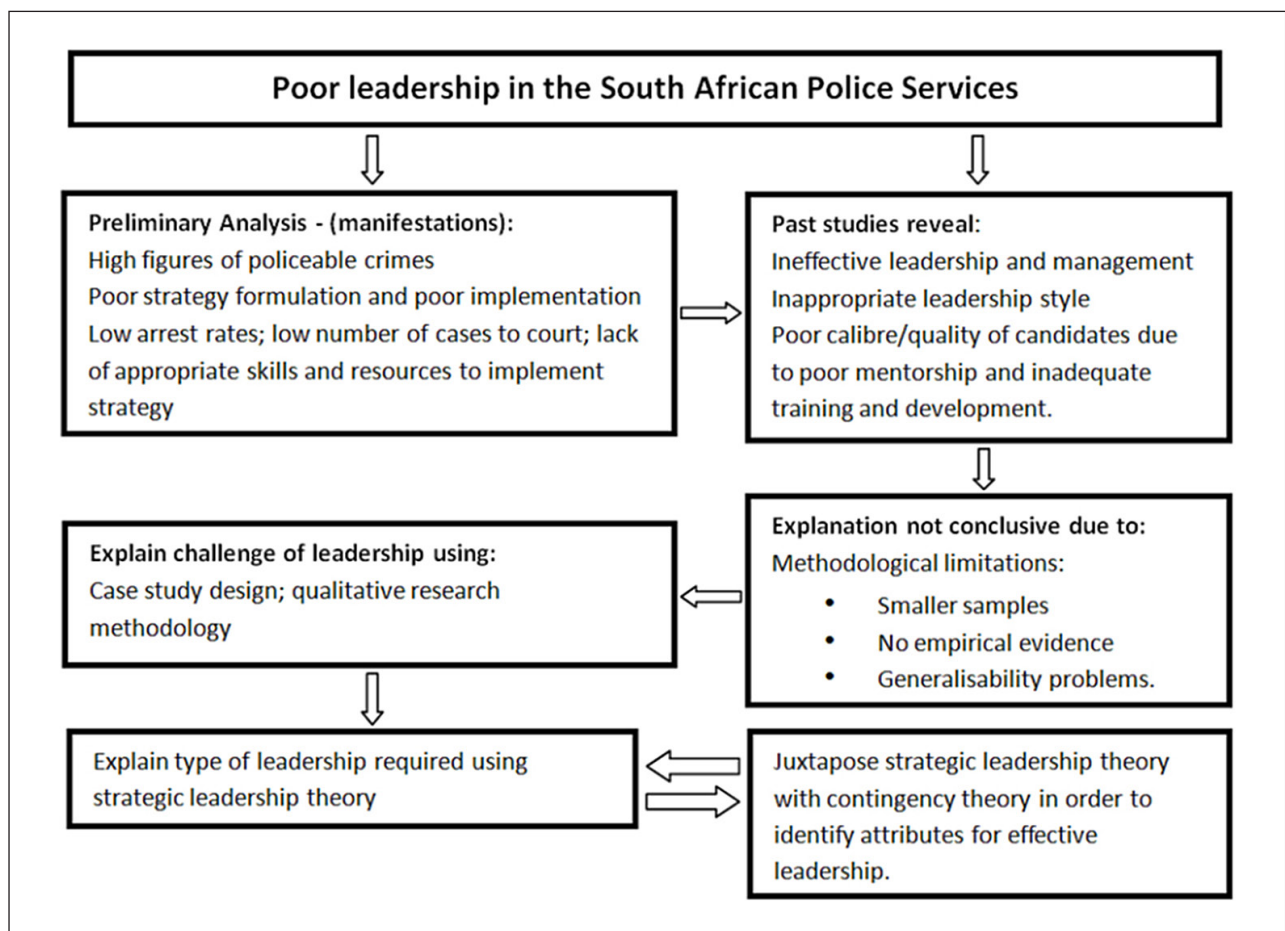
In Limpopo, crime statistics as of 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 before the YCOP program, were classified in two groups. The crime statistics of 2015/2016 Limpopo had recorded an increase by 4.3%, being 108 144 as opposed to 2014/15 as reported was 103 643. Crimes detected as a result of Police Action, Limpopo reported a decrease of 3.3% in 2015/16 with the number being 17 709 as

opposed to the previous year 2014/2015 which had the number of 18 321 (South African Police Service Annual Crime Report, 2015/16). Annual crime report of 2016/17 indicates that community-reported crimes decreased by 3.9% as the number of cases reported were 103 880 in 2016/17 as opposed to the 108 144 cases reported in 2015/16. Crimes combat as a result of police increased in 2016/17 by 13.2% as from 20 044 as opposed to the 17 709 cases detected in 2015/16 (SAPS Annual Report, 2016/17).

2.2 Challenges Faced by Community Policing Structures

The previous section illustrated the successes and the failures of community policing in different countries, in different receptions to community policing as a norm throughout the globe. Palmioto (2000) indicated that police agencies are changing over from traditional policing to community policing, in order to become more effective and efficient. This illustrates a move from the military type of policing

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Umanah and Wotela (2019)

towards the more inclusive and social manner of policing. The move has not been without challenges because there is still a lot that needs to be done to achieve the mandate of community policing. There are challenges that community policing is faced with. This section takes a look at what the other sources are saying regarding the challenges that are normally faced by community policing. On a global scale, Verma, Das and Abraham (2013) state that there are features that police leaders faced in implementing community policing which include communication, political interference, fear of the unknown, lack of training costs and supervision. The challenges were faced globally by structures which hindered the process of community based. In attending challenges ought to be transparent in terms of communication, rather than over-communication. The boundaries were to be established with politicians from the onset of community policing structures and they should be monitored throughout.

According to the study conducted by Fritsch and Caeti (2008) on challenges facing community policing, the findings were; Insufficient holistic researches, most evaluations were carried out on specific programmes; general implementation incapability of full implementation by what constitutes community police remains in paper; Involvement of politics, protecting community policing from criticism; and difficulties in determining the intricate relationship between community policing and crime. Pelser (1999) has also indicated that the institutional capacity, as the challenges faced by community policing, based on the ability to engage innovative practices and revitalise, was also empowering. Empowerment will lead to better engagement, while communication and trust between the two would be imperative. Also seen is a constant absence of an articulate and cohesive exercise, placement, and expansion sequence strategy geared towards improving service delivery.

A study by Onyeozili (2008), on the African front, see the challenge faced by African countries as inadequate training as a major challenge facing the community policing programme. Limited training disadvantages community policing. The lack of training on the police side means that their understanding of community policing becomes minimal. Police officers need to be trained and given new mandates which categorize the importance of community policing so as to equip them with tools to succeed in their roles. Training needs should be identified first. The issue of deployment instead

of recruitment is a disadvantage to advancement. Recruitment requires a strict process, certain criterion is determined and that means a suitable person is employment for a specific job. Kumari (2012) describes recruitment as a process that attracts prospective employees and stimulates them to apply for employment in an organization. When it comes to deployment, the strategies adopted in the tenure of the predecessor are more likely not to be implemented if the successor is deployed and that sets the process back. A person deployed gets acquainted to get transferred to other areas, which poses challenges to community policing, thus reducing effectiveness in functionality.

The training is also important for community policing members because it capacitates them and stimulates the skills that they might have been possessing before. The training will also compensate for those who did not have education but are keen to work in community structures. Training, in this instance, is not a once-off training but a regular training to keep the information updated for the community policing member. Rosenbaum (1994) states that although internal resistance to such innovation continues to be formidable in most police departments, community policing remains the only type of policing available for anyone who seeks to improve police operations and management or relations with the public. The existence of community policing remains vital despite the challenges associated with its implementation.

Mammus (2010) has found the logistics and resources to cover all the areas of the country as major challenges that affect community policing. Even if there is funding for community policing, the funding is usually inadequate and does not normally cover the costs that come with the operations of community policing. The funding normally comes from donations and good Samaritans. Transportation for the community police members remains a challenge, because they rely mainly on the transport from the stations they are based at and it is not adequate as the transport at the station also has to fulfil other roles. The actual police effort in crime prevention would be insufficient transportation, dilapidated structures including lack of maintained police stations (Machuki, 2015).

The above mentioned challenges made it impossible to attain the policing which, according to Bohm and Haley (2002), cooperation was needed to be

recognized by the police and to strengthen a working relationship with the communities; Problem solving was based on collective thinking and mapping, in collaboration with other stakeholders, to identify the root of the problem, propose solutions and implement them. Thus, community members identify the concerns that they feel are most threatening to their safety and well-being. The police on their side need to do a needs analysis of community members; Change Management – Forging community policing partnerships and implementing problem-solving strategies requires new responsibilities and adopting an interactive style of policing. Community policing, in contrast, emphasizes the importance of a collective effort, not only between community police structures and the police, but also the community at large and other stakeholders. The persistence of the challenges faced by community policing structures was based on implementation strategies that embodied community policing that was not reflected in the work of the community policing structures.

2.3 The Contribution of Young Civilians on Patrol towards Crime Prevention

The Limpopo Department of Community Safety took a bold move with the introduction of the YCOP programme as one of the community policing structures. The step was taken in 2016 and the participants had been placed in their respective police stations since the inception of the programme. The fight against crime in the Limpopo province has been intensified by the Limpopo province with the introduction of YCOP programme. It has been a collaborative effort between the communities, the other stakeholders, police and the youth structure which is the YCOP. The non-appearance of youth into safer communities has been an issue that has affected the worldwide arena. In support of including youth in crime prevention, Forman (2004) states that the absence of young people has, at times, undermined the effectiveness of local community policing. Another reason for the inclusion of the youth is that the satisfaction of youth with policing differs from that of the older generation.

YCOP as a programme, and its impact as a community policing structure, couldn't be determined as it was early to make a conclusion on whether it is contributing towards crime prevention. The concept was new as it was implemented in 2016 and it was implemented in Limpopo province only. It was never tested before in other provinces and as a result

there were no studies done before. The programme has never been evaluated for its effectiveness by any other researchers before or by the Department of Community Safety yet.

2.4 Capacity Building for YCOP

In 2016, the 496 YCOP recruited participants were taken for training in interpersonal skills and social crime prevention. The training took a week whereby the certificate of participants was presented. The areas of training included purpose, process of arrest (manner and effect of arrest), discipline and professional conduct. Those were the areas that the initial training of the YCOP programme focused on. The training was offered as a once-off and no other training was offered to the YCOP participants despite the programme running for two more years. In the years that followed, the participants were taken to a common facility where the process of re-registration was administered. The participants have throughout the following years not been subjected to any training except for the initial training they went for (DCS, 2016).

2.5 Attitude of Role Players towards YCOP

The Chief Justice Law and Social Policy (2013) stated that community policing doesn't only require the support of the police and the community, but should also involve partnerships with other stakeholders that have interests in safer communities. Organizations or stakeholders should have qualities that make an effective partnership possible. These qualities are usually organizational structures, places where meetings can take place and human resources. The community participation also plays a role in these qualities. YCOPs are situated in their respective stations. In every police station, there are existing community policing structures that had been serving at the stations. The YCOPs were expected to perform the duties that other community structures were performing and to engage with other stakeholders that the existing community police structures were engaging with. Other policing structures and stakeholders are also expected to be welcoming of the YCOPs.

3. Methodology and Data Collection

The study has employed the qualitative research with the focus on purposive sampling method since the objective of the study was to determine

the effectiveness of YCOP in crime prevention. The researcher observed the interaction of YCOPs with the police, their supervisor who is their coordinator at the police station, the interaction of YCOPs with CPFs and CSFs and VEP members. This gave the researcher an idea of their level of communication. With the semi-structured interviews, the researcher has been able to ask further questions that assisted in increasing the volume of data the researcher obtained. This data collection method gave the respondents a guidance of what to talk about and what kind of responses were expected from them. The method is flexible and the respondents were able to provide more data as it allowed them to elaborate on their responses. The study area is Seshego, Zone 7, 9 kilometers from Polokwane, sample size of YCOP participants were 496 throughout the province but only 8 YCOP participants who were based in the Seshego police station. It included one police official, who was their supervisor/coordinator, 1 Station Commander (Seshego Police Station), one Senior Manager from the Department of Community Safety as the custodian of the YCOP programme, 5 members of the Community Police Forum, 2 of whom were from the sub forum, 2 members of the VEP, 2 members from NPO and 5 members of Business Against Crime. They all worked closely with the YCOPs in crime prevention around Seshego area. The total sample size is 25. The researcher asked respondents about their

role in crime prevention, how YCOPs contributed towards crime prevention and if YCOPs were visible to them. The researcher also used a tape recorder to record the interviews and then translated the audio transcript into a written format.

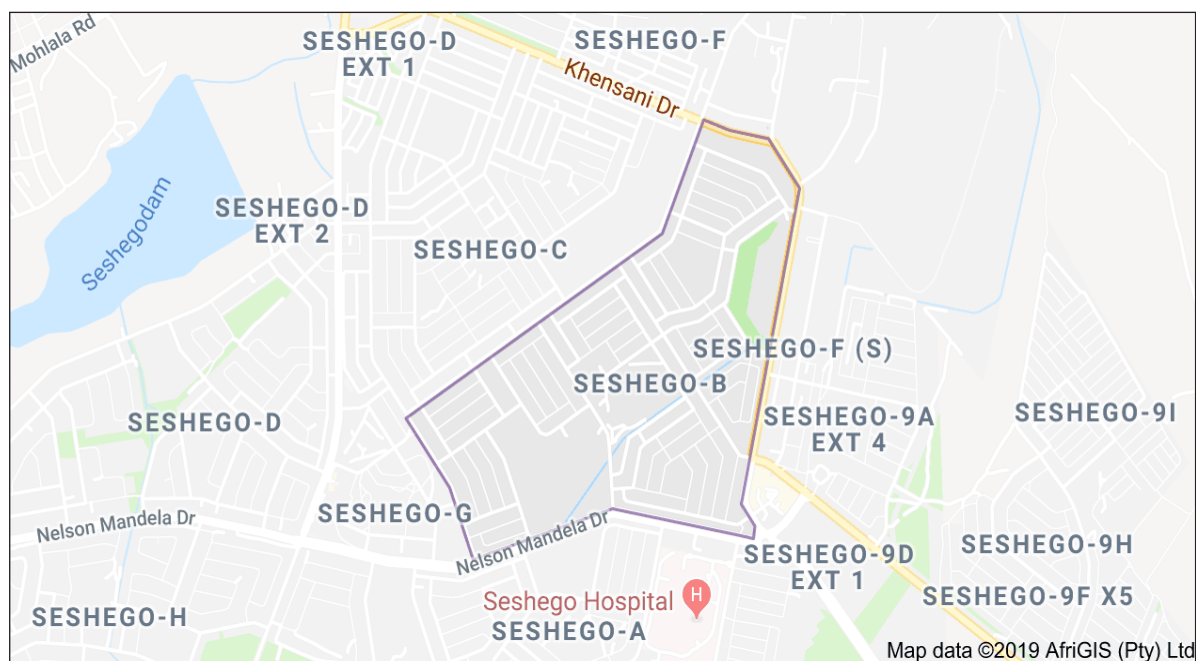
With regard to Ethical Considerations, approval was obtained from the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC). Permission to interview was granted by the Seshego Police Station. Limitations of the study could be confined to one topic, not the whole of the community policing concept. Also the topic under study was never researched before; as a result, getting literature based on the specific topic was not easy.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Contribution of YCOPs in Crime Prevention

Findings reveal that all the respondents have indicated that YCOP have made a tremendous change into the policing precinct. The respondents agreed that YCOP served as a link. The community accepted the police through YCOP participants and community members were able to talk freely about the issues of crime to YCOP participants because YCOP participants were also the members of the community. All of the respondents agreed that the YCOP programme helped with the reduction of some

Figure 2: Polokwane Municipality (2019)



Source: Map data ©2019 AfriGIS (Pty) Ltd

crimes, such as housebreaking and drug-related crimes, due to the YCOP being part of the community themselves and they had information on the drug hotspots within the area, hence they were able to provide the information to the police.

4.2 Description of the Crime Pattern Around Seshego Policing Area Since the Inception of YCOP

All 25 respondents indicated that there was a decrease in crimes within the area. They indicated that it was specifically the crimes that involved the usage of drugs which had decreased since the inception of the programme. The police had been able to find the drug hot-spots in the area with the assistance of the YCOP. YCOPs gave them information about the drug hot spots after tip-offs from community members. All 25 respondents agreed that drug-related crimes had been on the decrease since the inception of YCOP programme. The police, YCOPs and other stakeholders also visited crime hot spots regularly.

4.3 The Impact Made by YCOPs

The majority, which is 22 of the respondents, believed that community members were inspired by the YCOP programme and also indicated that ordinary community members were then interested in joining the YCOP programme. They were specifically approached by ordinary community members at home or at the police station enquiring about how to enroll for the YCOP programme. Furthermore, community members encouraged their children to work closely with YCOPs; and that was a contributing factor to the popularity of YCOPs within the area. The programme was contributing a lot towards safer communities so that YCOP participants do not only work from the Seshego police station anymore. The cluster office, which is the Seshego cluster office that houses all the police stations within the Seshego policing precinct, had also co-opted the YCOP to work from the Seshego cluster office on some days, so as to increase the manpower at the cluster office. The cluster office often invited YCOPs to come and work with them during their crime prevention campaigns. The respondents have also indicated that it was specifically the crimes that involved the usage of drugs which have decreased since the inception of the programme. The police had been able to find the drugs hot-spots in the area with the assistance of the YCOP. According to

Sebola (2014), policing Forums must initiate, plan and manage projects aimed at preventing and combating crime. This observation is an indication that the police have succeeded in creating cooperation between the police and the YCOPS.

The researcher observed the interpersonal relation between the YCOP participants and the coordinator. Not only was the event attended by the YCOP and the coordinator, but other SAPS members and other community structure members also attended, who were in agreement with YCOPs who said they made a contribution by being able to work with all those that were involved in preventing crime. Seeing YCOP participants walking to and from the police after the event, further confirmed fears raised by one of the respondent about the safety of YCOP participants within their communities.

4.4 Challenges Experienced by YCOPs in the Police Station

The majority of the respondents cited inferiority complex by the police as one of the challenges YCOPs experienced at the police station. They strongly alleged that the police were also implicated in criminal activities and, as a result, some police did not want YCOPs at the police station due to fear of exposure. Other respondents argued that it was the misinterpretation of the YCOP programme that led to the cold reception that the YCOP participants were getting at the police station. This response is associated with the fact that there is not enough information about what YCOP is and some police do not understand what it is doing at the station.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

It was recommended that the YCOP participants, their coordinator, station commander and the stakeholders should be provided with a formal workshop on the programme. The workshop should include the conduct and outline the duties of the YCOPs. They should perform social crime prevention and not police duties, and should also be inducted on introduction to YCOP's, policies, practices and processes. This may assist in enhancing the working relationship between YCOP participants and police. YCOPs should be involved in strategic planning. They should sign a code of conduct as soon as their admission, and be given clear prescripts on the processes of disciplinary for members who are found to be in transgression. Participants should be regularly

provided with skills workshops to enhance their skills, such as communication, writing and financial management. The programme should be based on social crime prevention and should not have an exit plan. The participants will exit the programme into the job market above their youth years. They should be equipped with the necessary skills that will assist them to transition to their job environment; there should be a clear portrayal on the role of DCS and SAPS with responsibilities.

Recommendations are that YCOPs should be engaged in a variety of programmes designed to dose crime and disorder problems in the community in order to make the community safer. Police should identify the root causes of crime and disorder problems within the community, they should also worry about social problems in the community and must be responsive towards individuals who are YCOP participants that are at risk of being victims of crime.

SAPS should involve institutions such as schools, Higher education institutions, local churches and community organisations to play a significant role in community policing and community cooperation. There is a need for YCOP and community relations, and the resources should be directed into regions such as transport, cellphones and stationery. There is a dire need for services of transport for YCOPs because the participants walk to and from the station without a guarantee for their safety. Stationery should also be provided because the participants utilize the station's stationery which is not sufficient. YCOPs need to be able to communicate; as a result cellphones are essential to their everyday functioning at their stations. Resolutions should be made by SAPS management to make funds available for YCOP to initiate crime prevention campaigns such as door to door campaigns and school visits etc., which are aimed at building partnerships and community problem solving. YCOPs should not only engage in activities that are initiated by the police and other community policing structures but should take charge, and initiate their own projects.

The activities that the YCOP participants are engaged in should be regularly evaluated by the YCOP's manager and kept on record; also remuneration by stipend towards YCOPs should be re-looked at. The duty register that the coordinators submit to the Department of Community Safety on behalf of YCOPs should include a written verified report. The report may assist in enhancing the writing skills of

YCOP participants. The fact that the YCOPs feel much more comfortable working in clusters, rather than at the police station, should be investigated. There should also be clearer prescripts on the process of co-opting YCOP members to other offices since the YCOP program is police station-based, and there was no YCOP programme at a cluster level. The association of YCOPs to other offices should be formalised and constituted.

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